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ABSTRACT

Incidences of aggressive and violent actions in schools have been increasing. The goals of this practicum were to reduce aggressive and violent behavior in a large, comprehensive, public high school and to make students and staff aware of peaceful alternatives to conflicts. Solution strategies included teaching conflict resolution skills in the classroom and forming a peer mediation program, both of which emphasized students working with other students. A group of 36 high school seniors, who comprised the peer leadership program and who reflected the ethnic diversity of the school, were trained in conflict resolution techniques. These seniors then taught these skills to classes of freshmen that they met with on a weekly basis. Results indicate that students became increasingly aware of peaceful alternatives when faced with a conflict and that there were resources they could turn to in the high school. Feedback from the presentation of the conflict resolution techniques was positive. Peer mediation was successful in 21 out of 24 sessions with 66 students taking part. Overall, disciplinary referrals for aggressive and violent behavior were reduced, but other factors, such as tightened security and stricter adherence to discipline, also contributed to this decline. Appended are numerous surveys, a mediation session record form, and a discipline referral report. Contains 44 references. (RJM)

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ED 400 495

Reducing Aggression in a High School Setting Through a Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Program

by

Theodore M. Kinasewitz

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Cluster 53

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1996

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Theodore M. Kinasewitz under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

August 26, 1996
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen
Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		vi
ABSTRACT		vii
Chapter I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	3
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	6
	Problem Description	6
	Problem Documentation	7
	Causative Analysis of the Problem	10
	Relationship of the Problem to Literature	13
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	18
	Goals and Expectations	18
	Expected Outcomes	18
	Measurement of Outcomes	19
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	21
	Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions	21
	Description of Selected Solution	32
	Report of Action Taken	34

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ... 43

Results 43
Discussion 51
Recommendations 57
Dissemination 60

REFERENCES 62

APPENDIXES

A STUDENT HELP QUESTIONNAIRE 67

B STUDENT HELP SURVEY (STAFF) 69

C PEER MEDIATION CENTER RECORD OF MEDIATION SESSION 71

D PEER MEDIATION CENTER POST-MEDIATION SURVEY (STUDENT) 73

E PEER MEDIATION CENTER STAFF POST-MEDIATION QUESTIONNAIRE 75

F CONFLICT SURVEY FOR STUDENTS 77

G STAFF SURVEY, CONFLICT RESOLUTION 79

H DISCIPLINE REFERRAL REPORT 81

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Student Responses to Survey Question: "What Should You Do if a Fight Might Break Out?"	9
2	Staff Responses to Question Concerning "What Would You Do if a Fight Might Break Out Between Students?"	10
3	Student Responses to Survey Question: "If You Were in a Situation That Might Escalate into a Serious Confrontation, Including Fighting, What Would You Be Most Likely to Do?"	46
4	Student Responses to Survey Question: "If a Friend (or Friends) Were in a Similar Situation, What Would You Do?"	47
5	Responses to Staff Survey: "If You Were Concerned About a Situation Between Students That Might Escalate into a More Serious Confrontation, What Would You Do?"	48

ABSTRACT

Reducing Aggression in a High School Setting Through a Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Program. Kinasewitz, Theodore M., 1996: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Conflict Resolution/Peace/Problem Solving/Peer Groups/Peer Mediation/Aggression/Secondary Education/School Psychologists.

The writer's work setting, a large comprehensive public high school, reflected the increased incidence of aggression and violence that took place throughout society. Conflicts were often brought into the high school, even if they stemmed from outside factors. The situation was further compounded in that there was not a systematic approach that dealt with the conflict in a manner that brought closure. The goals of this practicum were to reduce aggressive and violent behavior in the high school through peaceful means of conflict resolution, to make students and staff aware that there were peaceful alternatives in conflict situations, and to give students a chance to learn and practice peaceful alternatives to conflict.

The writer developed a student-based solution strategy to reduce conflict. A select group of 36 seniors, who comprised the peer leadership program and reflected the ethnic diversity of the high school, were trained in conflict resolution techniques. In turn, these seniors taught these skills to classes of freshmen that they met with on a weekly basis. Twelve of the senior peer leaders received further training in mediation and served as peer mediators.

Results indicated that the practicum goals were largely met. There was increased awareness on the part of students that there were peaceful alternatives when faced with a

conflict situation, and there were resources in the high school, either in the form of peer mediation or referral to the school's crisis intervention counselors. Staff also became more cognizant of these resources. The feedback from the presentation of conflict resolution techniques was positive, and this component of the practicum reached the most students. Although not as widely used as anticipated, peer mediation was successful in 21 out of 24 sessions with 66 students taking part. Overall, the high school experienced a reduction in disciplinary referrals for aggressive and violent behavior, but there were other factors such as tightened security and stricter adherence to the discipline code, which played a significant part in this decline.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer's work setting is in a small New England city with a population of approximately 70,000. This city was primarily a manufacturing center for most of the 19th Century through the first half of the 20th Century. The nature of the city changed after World War II, and it has evolved into a heterogeneous community with economic and ethnic diversity. Several Fortune 500 corporations relocated manufacturing plants and headquarters to this city, and a large number of smaller support companies have been established. To a large extent, this city has evolved into a bedroom community for corporate professionals who work both locally and in major corporate centers located as far as 90 minutes away. In short, the city's character can best be described as a combination of white-collar professional and blue-collar industrial workers.

The ethnic and racial make-up of the city has changed in the last 30 years. The city has always had a sizable Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and Portuguese population, but

this time span has also seen a large influx of African-Americans, Southeast Asians and more Hispanics. According to 1990 census data, the most populous groups are Whites (74%), Hispanics (16%), African-Americans (10%) and Asian (4%). The minority population of the high school is 36% (African-American, Hispanic, Asian). This diversity is reflected in the public school system, in which students come from homes in which more than 20 different languages are spoken.

The city epitomizes many characteristics of a small town, but there is also a big city influence because of its location about one hour and three hours respectively, from two of this nation's ten largest metropolitan areas. There is a state university situated in this city which provides many educational and cultural activities. There is significant corporate support for both the university and the public school system.

The city is served by many schools. The public school system has about 8400 students in 13 elementary, two middle, and one high school (which includes a separate alternative high school). There are also six parochial (Catholic, Lutheran and Jewish) elementary schools, one Catholic high school, one state vocational-technical high school, and one private preparatory school.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a school psychologist in the city's lone public high school. The student population is approximately 2300 in grades 9-12 and the school is divided into two equal administrative units. The psychologist is assigned to one of these units. The writer's main duties include providing psychological assessment, interviewing in crisis situations, counseling with students and parents, serving as a liaison with state and community agencies, and consulting with staff.

The largest part of the job involves diagnostic assessment. This takes place in two ways. The first is through referrals to a multi-disciplinary, prereferral student assistance team which deals with students who are experiencing problems in school and who may need more intensive support services. Often the diagnostic work may occur through a family and/or individual interview with the student, observation of the student, or through a review of the student's records and consultation with other staff members. Sometimes a formal battery of tests may be requested from the psychologist to ascertain whether significant cognitive or emotional factors are interfering with the student's progress. These data are shared with the multi-disciplinary student assessment team mandated under PL

94-142, known in the writer's state as the Planning and Placement Team (PPT). The PPT determines a student's eligibility and need for special education services.

The second main use of psychological testing is with the approximately 240 special education students in the writer's high school. No later than every third year, the PPT must review the progress and determine the continuing eligibility of a special education student. In practice this has meant that the psychologist retests the student with evaluative instruments that are the same or similar to those used when the student was first assessed for special education eligibility. Although this is not actually required by law, this procedure has become common practice in the majority of school districts.

The writer has worked as a school psychologist in public school districts for 23 years, the last 20 in his current school district. He has worked on various grade levels, from preschool through high school, but most of his professional experience has been on the high school level. The writer's experience has also included serving as a psychologist in two residential facilities, one for deaf-blind students and also at a treatment center for emotionally disturbed boys. The writer has also taught as an adjunct instructor in psychology at several colleges and

universities, teaching courses in general psychology, child and adolescent development, and exceptional children. He is a member of national, state, and local teachers' associations and at various times has been a member of national and state organizations for school psychologists.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There was an increase in the incidence of aggressive and violent actions taking place in society at large, schools in general, and specifically, in the writer's high school. One only had to read the newspapers or follow the news on television to see frequent occurrences of this nature. Statistics were compiled in many studies and they all pointed to this as a growing problem. Perhaps most worrisome was the fact that many of the actions were being committed by individuals at an ever younger age.

The writer's community reflected these trends. There appeared to be an escalation of conflict between youths with corresponding inappropriately aggressive and destructive responses. When conflict occurred, students were more likely to resort to confrontational, aggressive solutions. In many cases, the conflicts arose from situations outside of school, but erupted in the school building. Once the conflict was brought into school, the chances of escalation greatly increased because of all the other students who then

took sides and joined in the conflict. Some of the incidents reported as antecedents to school clashes included gang rivalries, racial differences, dating problems and neighborhood conflict.

Briefly stated then, the problem was that in the face of an increasing number of conflicts brought to school, there was not a consistent, regularly followed, comprehensive approach to resolving conflict peacefully and with closure at the writer's high school.

Problem Documentation

Data supported the perception that there was an increasing incidence of actions that could be described as aggressive or violent in the high school. Based upon school disciplinary records from the previous school year, there were 60 referrals for fighting, 212 for verbal aggression (talking back, threats, calling someone disparaging names), 14 for possession of a weapon, 29 for assault. Two crisis intervention counselors were assigned to the high school who, as part of their responsibilities, were often called upon to help resolve conflicts. They reported a total of 174 students that they dealt with in actual or potential conflict situations in the past year, while five years ago the number of such cases was 112.

The community and the Board of Education recognized the increase in aggression and violence, much of it due to gangs, drugs and weapons. The Board of Education expelled 36 students from school during the past year (an increase from 7 two years ago). This number might have been somewhat inflated because of a new state law mandating expulsion for students found with weapons. In addition, this same law permitted a local school board to expel students arrested off campus for crimes involving weapons or sale of drugs, which this Board of Education decided to do. Four officers from the city police department were currently stationed at the high school on a daily basis (two inside, two outside the building).

Even though the crisis counselors practiced conflict resolution for a number of years, there still appeared to be confusion or a lack of knowledge regarding steps to take in instances where students may engaged in fighting, or what staff members should be contacted. This was true for both students and staff.

A survey (Appendix A) was administered to 138 freshmen about seeking help for themselves and friends when in difficulty. The questions that pertained to friends in conflict are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Responses to Survey Question: "What Should You Do if a Fight Might Break Out?" (n=138)

Response	Frequency
Get other friends involved	16
Stay out of it	12
Tell people at school	50
Tell the police	4
Not sure	56

Note: Of the 50 respondents who would "Tell people at school," 13 did not know whom they would tell.

Thus it could be seen that 69/138 (half) were unable to name the correct procedure or person to contact.

In turn, 42 staff members were surveyed with a similar questionnaire (Appendix B). Their responses to the question about students in conflict situations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Staff Responses to Question Concerning "What Would You Do if a Fight Might Break Out Between Students?" (n=42)

Response	Frequency
Refer to an administrator	12
Refer to another staff member	24
Do nothing if it is a situation outside of school	5
Contact students' parents	0
Inform the police officers stationed at high school	1
Not sure	0

Looking at the responses to both of these surveys, it could be seen that there was not a perceived consistent manner of addressing conflict in the high school.

Causative Analysis of the Problem

There appeared to be a number of factors contributing to the glorification of aggression and the likelihood that conflicts would be resolved in aggressive, sometimes even violent, non-peaceful ways. To begin with, society in general pays attention to a "quick fix" and instant

gratification. As anyone who has worked in the field of conflict resolution can attest, resolving conflict peacefully through negotiation can be a strenuous, time-consuming procedure that is the antithesis of the quick fix. In addition, in conflict situations, often the ego is at stake, and the successful solution is one that is usually seen as assertive, aggressive, and that allows one to "win."

In looking to answers to conflict, today's adolescents have been exposed to aggressive, violent solutions every day. In many cases, this is behavior learned and reinforced both at home and in the larger environment. Many parents espouse non-violence, but the message that they have often passed on to their children is "Do not start a fight, but if someone hurts you, hit them back." Today's popular youth heroes (athletes, movie stars, rock and rap performers) reflect an aggressiveness that is then transmitted and glorified through the media.

Our society glorifies war and other means of aggression as a means to resolve conflict. One only has to observe the general euphoria this nation experienced at the conclusion of the Persian Gulf War, and the sense of unity often generated through a nation when it goes to war. Our heroes are often military figures. In school, we study military campaigns and military heroes, but seldom incorporate the

study of peacemakers into the school curriculum. How many people can identify Dorothy Day, Jeanette Rankin or Thomas Merton?

A third reason for the rise in aggressive conflict in our schools may be due to the proliferation of gangs and membership in them at earlier ages. The police department in the writer's city have reported on the growing presence of local gangs, which are sponsored by well-established gangs from much larger cities which are in proximity to this community.

The corresponding need to "prove oneself" in front of peers has contributed to the escalation of aggression and confrontation in conflict situations. Conflicts that used to end in fistfights are now increasingly resolved with the use of deadly knives and guns (Hechinger, 1992). There was one gunshot fatality of a student from the writer's high school at a party during the past year. This unfortunate incident almost escalated into full-scale racial conflict because of a single distasteful comment overheard by two other students. Other suburban and rural towns near the writer's city have reported instances of youths bringing weapons to school, with some of the students as young as middle school age.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature indicated that there is growing concern over the escalation of aggression and violence among adolescents. The rise of violent behavior in this country has been accompanied by a decrease in the modal age for violent offenses (Blumstein, Farrington & Moitra, 1985). Several studies point to the fact that arrest records show that the majority of antisocial and criminal acts of violence are committed by teenagers and young adults (Elliott, Ageton, Huizinga, Knowles & Canter, 1983; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983). A survey by Metropolitan Life (1994) indicates that the rise in violence in our schools is very much on the minds of students, teachers and parents.

Adolescents in this country were the only age group that had not experienced a decline in age-adjusted mortality (Prothrow-Stith, 1991). Homicide developed as the second leading cause of death for all persons between the ages of 15 and 24 and was the leading cause of death for African-American youth (Hausman, Spivak, Prothrow-Stith & Roeber, 1992). The tendency toward violence and aggression among today's teenagers was cited as a legal, psychological, social and public health issue (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

Another factor was the relationship of aggression and violence to adolescence as a developmental stage.

Disruptive behaviors, including aggression, increase in adolescence (Guerra, Tolan & Hammond, 1992). These same authors postulated that the incidence of antisocial behavior increases during adolescence and that children already prone to aggression become more aggressive and violent during this time. Other research indicated that most individuals who display habitual aggressive behavior during adolescence developed this pattern during childhood (Farrington, 1986; Guerra, Tolan & Hammond, 1992; Larson, 1994; Reid & Patterson, 1991). Jones, Sheridan and Binns (1993) identified the cause of such adolescent problem behaviors as due to a social skills deficit in the early years.

An alternate explanation by Guerra, Tolan and Hammond (1992) was that the stress of adolescence causes more individuals to flirt with antisocial and violent behavior from time to time, causing an increase in the prevalence of such behaviors. Other studies (Farrington, 1983; Wolfgang, Thornberry & Figlio, 1987) supported this view that the increase was in the overall incidence. This means that many adolescents engage in some antisocial behavior, which includes violence. For most adolescents, such behavior is relatively infrequent and is part of typical development as teenagers. Thus, there is a temporary surge in antisocial and other aggressive behaviors for a large number of

adolescents during this stage of their development (Moffitt & Silva, 1988). However, this normative approach should not diminish habitual acts of violence committed by a relatively small number of individuals. For some individuals, violence and aggression do not taper off but instead escalate (Guerra, Tolan & Hammond, 1992). One study which tried to isolate these chronically violent individuals stated that although these teenagers represented not more than 10% of the adolescent population, they were responsible for as many as half of the serious acts of violence committed by youth (Wolfgang, Figlio & Sellin, 1972).

The literature identified a number of causes for the prevalence of aggressive, even violent reactions in conflict situations. One reason is that adolescents are not heavily invested in relationships, unless it is with close friends or romantic partners (Laursen, 1993). Thus, the lack of concern, or disengagement from others, makes it more likely that they will lash out destructively, rather than deal constructively in a disagreement. The likelihood of volatility in these encounters is increased by factors in adolescence such as the predisposition for erratic and aggressive action (Malmquist, 1970), characterized by rapid mood fluctuations and inconsistent behavior (Call, 1979; Weiner, 1970).

A second cause relates to the significant demographic shifts that have taken place in our communities and in our schools. This has in many cases led to ethnic tensions, exacerbated by increased competition for limited resources and social services in what has generally been a period of economic retrenchment (Klugman & Greenberg, 1991). The decline in family and neighborhood support systems also have contributed to a lack of community bonding.

Last, aggression can be characterized in children as a process in which the child is trained to interact coercively with parents and siblings, and this continuing home pattern will be resistant to the school's attempts at socialization (Reid & Patterson, 1991). Such a long-established pattern will be hard to break, particularly with all the other stressors and predispositions to violence in adolescence. Particularly vulnerable are the youth living in poverty and single-parent families:

> Violence against children and adolescents at the hands of mothers' sex partners, and even by drug and alcohol-addicted mothers themselves, is identified by many researchers as evoking, in turn, violence by the teenagers raised in such an environment. Again, violent behavior is hardly confined to inner cities;

affluent families are simply better able to conceal its ravages, unless they occasionally break out in headlines.

When children grow up as witnesses to aggression between family members, they may conclude that to resort to brute force is an acceptable part of family and social life. (Hechinger, 1992, p. 151)

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goals of this practicum were to reduce aggressive and violent behavior in the high school environment through peaceful means of conflict resolution, make students and staff aware that there are peaceful alternatives in conflict situations, and give students a chance to learn and practice peaceful alternatives to conflict.

Expected Outcomes

The expected goals and outcomes projected for this practicum were as follows:

1. The primary outcome will be a peaceful resolution of the conflict in at least 75% of the cases of the projected 150 students who will be referred to peer mediation during the course of this practicum.

2. Students and staff will know whom to go to in the school setting when aware of a conflict situation.

3. A core group of 36 high school seniors, representative of the multi-ethnic composition of the high

school, will be trained in effective conflict resolution strategies.

4. The number of referrals for aggressive acts (including verbal attacks, physical assault and fighting) against other students or staff (a total of 338 cases last year) will decline by at least 25% at the end of the implementation of this practicum.

Measurement of Outcomes

The expected outcomes at the end of the implementation of the practicum were to be measured in the following ways:

1. A record of the mediation session (Appendix C) was to be maintained. This recorded that the mediation session took place as planned and also stated whether agreement and closure were reached regarding the conflict that brought the students to mediation.

2. At the conclusion of the practicum, surveys were to be administered to students (Appendix F) and staff (Appendix G) to assess their knowledge of, and willingness to use, peer mediation in conflict situations.

3. This outcome would be measured by documentation of the training sessions having taken place. The effectiveness of the mediation sessions was partially assessed by faculty observation and also by the post-mediation session

questionnaires administered to students who took part in the sessions (Appendix D) and to staff who referred the students (Appendix E).

4. Records of discipline referrals (Appendix H) would be used as a measurement of this objective.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem is that there were many conflicts, often stemming from factors outside the school environment, that were brought into the writer's high school. The situation was further compounded by the fact that there was not a systematic approach to dealing with the conflict in a manner that brought closure. The fact that conflict situations had increased, and often threatened to be solved in an aggressive fashion, meant that a comprehensive approach had to be brought to bear on the problem.

A review of the literature revealed a number of possible interventions that could be employed to reduce conflict in the high school setting. It should be emphasized that conflict is a normal part of everyday life and should be acknowledged as such. The fact that there is conflict is not necessarily bad; instead, it can also be a positive force which brings about change and can serve to enhance important relationships (Sadalla, Henriquez & Holmberg, 1987). Many of the skills involved in conflict

resolution, such as expressing feelings, active listening, clearly expressing oneself verbally, and problem-solving are already taught in many areas of the school curriculum. When sequenced together, they form the process of conflict resolution (Connecticut State Department of Education, 1994; Dreyfuss, 1990). Clearly, conflict resolution is a skill which individuals should and can be trained in:

> In a world where conflict is quickly equated with violence, it is important to distinguish between the two in order to underscore the opportunities presented by conflict. When violence emerges, these opportunities are lost. . . . It is crucial that we embrace the positive aspects of conflict and articulate these as essential life skills. This is particularly important for those of us who are involved in teaching young people about the world.
>
> In many respects, a conflict is what disputants perceive it to be. Conflicts emerge out of the commonplace events of everyday life and demonstrate what the disputants consider to be important and relevant to them. Thus, *the elements for the peaceful settlement of a conflict are to be found in the conflict itself.*

> In order to resolve a dispute, it is crucial that the disputants communicate directly to one another why the dispute is important, what it means to them, what emotions it has generated, what fears and angers have arisen, and what attitudes and impressions they have of the other disputant. (Sadalla, Henriquez & Holmberg, 1987, p. ii)

Thus, these authors stated that an interpersonal context is very important in resolving conflict. Understanding the reasons that people resort to verbal attacks makes it less likely that a person will get angry when assailed, and thus, it is more likely that a positive resolution of the problem will occur (Margolis, 1990). Interpersonal skills training has been shown to lead to effective conflict resolution (McFarland & Culp, 1992). It is important to learn about the conflict or dispute from the other person's perspective, have the individual learn to recognize how the other party could have misunderstood his/her actions or intentions, and learn what the conflict means to the other party and what is at stake (Sadalla, Henriquez & Holmberg, 1987).

From a more theoretical perspective, peace studies courses can ultimately lead to effective conflict resolution skills on the part of the student body (Ediger, 1989).

However, a study by Christie (1991) found that it was not possible to predict what specific classroom activities led to a particular belief system or behavior, but the overall atmosphere improved. The campus presentations of columnist Colman McCarthy from The Center for Teaching Peace, and his argument that each one of us is called to be a peacemaker in our personal and political lives, have been well received; staff from the Center have successfully taught peace courses in local high schools.

Another classroom approach was brought to secondary students by Riddle (1988). Titled "The Anatomy of Conflict," the course examines conflict on a personal, group and world level. The unit introduces students to the mechanisms of conflict at all levels and explores basic conflict management/resolution alternatives. As a result, students learn about conflict as phenomena with causes, consequences and different possible outcomes. Also included is a discussion of the morality of conflict and whether there is a link between personal and interpersonal conflict and its resolution. Riddle followed this up with a second program that was geared specifically to international conflict such as the Israeli-Arab conflict and Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence during the British-Indian struggle for independence.

Another facet of successful conflict resolution interventions is taking into account specific needs of multi-cultural student bodies and communities. Successful programs acknowledge and discuss differences between different groups of students, and see that any leadership roles are apportioned to members of all groups (Jorgensen & Brown, 1992; Klugman & Greenberg, 1991). In the Jorgensen and Brown program, issues causing inter-ethnic tension and conflict are addressed in classroom discussions. A major focus is to get students to understand the origins of their attitudes toward different groups. The Klugman and Greenberg study highlighted the Student Problem Identification/Resolution (SPIR) Program for secondary schools. SPIR is designed to help school administrators learn about student perceptions of problems that get in the way of their education. Through this program, students of different backgrounds learn about the common concerns that they have, and this process helps promote a positive school climate. SPIR allows students the opportunity to have a stake in the goals and objectives of the school and is a form of empowerment. Placing the students in mixed groups had a great effect on reducing misunderstandings. Students found that there was usually a great deal of agreement as to what were seen as being the major problems, although their

varied backgrounds played a key role in ascribing different causes for the problems. A by-product for principals is that they often learned about problems that they previously did not know existed.

A public health model of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention has been presented which focuses on both individuals and systems in the fields of conflict resolution and violence prevention (Guerra, Tolan & Hammond, 1992; Larson, 1994; Prothrow-Stith, 1991). Larson conducted a thorough review of many primary, secondary and tertiary programs. He noted that dealing with behavioral correlates such as impulsivity and anger management was a key factor in the prevention of violence. He also found that established cognitive behavioral procedures such as self-instruction, problem-solving, modeling and behavioral rehearsal are integrated throughout successful primary curricular approaches.

Targeting individual or cohorts of students at risk is the focus of secondary prevention. These students can be reliably predicted from knowledge of early childhood characteristics such as high rates of aggressive responses in social situations, hostile attitudes and risk factors such as being raised under a coercive parenting style. One such program, Anger Coping (Lochman & Curry, 1986), provides

awareness of cues which lead to arousal of anger, and works to remediate deficits in seeking peaceful alternatives. This program has been favorably evaluated in its use in the Milwaukee and Long Beach, California public schools. Another secondary program, targeted at African-American youth as a single group at high risk, is Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT), an outgrowth of a research project of Dayton, Ohio public schools (Hammond & Yung, 1991). Larson's (1994) review of the program lauds it for effective cognitive-behavioral techniques and no-nonsense, culturally-sensitive advice for the participants.

Tertiary prevention targets those students who are in their teens and who still exhibit all of the at-risk factors and behaviors. While reactive in nature, it still has a place in the reduction in the incidence of future aggression and violence. One such program is Think First: Anger and Aggression Management for Secondary Level Students (Larson, 1991). It is directed exclusively on anger-induced aggression in school. It provides a structure for the high school staff to work with high-risk adolescents on specific issues that come up in the school setting. There have been two limited studies which appear to demonstrate some success with the program.

There were indications in the literature that an approach that is more peer-oriented may be more successful in resolving conflicts between teenagers. This situation allows for an equal exchange of ideas and a feeling of trust that one's viewpoint will be considered and respected. Kruger and Tomasello (1986) found that, in line with Piagetian theory, the processes of decentration and moral reasoning occur more easily in peer interactions. These authors observed that children reasoned more equally and actively with each other than with adults, and such peer interaction aids in the development of social-moral reasoning skills. Support for this developmental approach of peer interaction was found in a study by Leyva and Furth (1986). They found that the ability to resolve conflict improved as a function of age. The ability to consider different viewpoints is related to the development of formal logical thinking. Adolescents are able to consider "constructive compromises" which require the ability to propose and consider multiple options. Compromises are more likely to be formulated in peer relations than in those where there is an authority figure, since in peer situations compromise situations are more likely to be developed because no one is in a position of power. The authors stated that moral reasoning develops primarily in peer

relations which are characterized by mutual respect and cooperation. The significant correlations between compromise resolution and moral reasoning in peer, but not authoritative contexts, provide support for this developmental framework.

The above studies and data lent support for a peer-based intervention program for resolving conflict. One of the most successful approaches cited in the literature is peer mediation (Benson & Benson, 1993; Faconti & Hagerstrand, 1987; Koch, 1988; Payne, 1993; Sorenson, 1992). Different programs of this type have been used in many school systems. Benson and Benson (1993) offer the following explanation of what is entailed in a mediation program:

> Mediation is a process of communication and problem solving that leads to resolutions acceptable to all parties involved. Peer mediation programs offer an opportunity for students to learn how to deal with conflicts in alternative ways that lead to peaceful settlements of disputes rather than irreconcilable differences. These programs recognize anger as a natural emotion but seek to instruct students in positive ways of dealing with it. Students learn resolution and problem-solving skills that can lead to

> win-win rather than win-lose outcomes. They learn to deal with differing opinions, to listen to and understand another's point of view, and to maintain respect for the dignity of each with whom they have a conflict. In essence, these programs teach responsible behavior. (p. 427)

One of the earliest examples noted in the literature is a conflict management program which was started at Mt. Diablo High School in 1981. It is a preventive program which uses trained student facilitators to resolve conflicts between individual students and student groups. Students are taught communication and decision-making skills to help reduce tensions. As a result, students have power and control over their actions, and conflicts are resolved before they start. According to its coordinators, the benefits of the program are that it serves as an alternative to fighting and suspension, thus keeping students in school. In addition, it provides discipline alternatives for faculty, frees counselors and administrators for other duties, and helps to improve the overall school climate (Faconti & Hagerstrand, 1987). Among the skills developed in the training sessions, the student peer mediators learn communication skills, including active listening. They learn how to decode verbal and nonverbal messages, examine

feelings, and solve problems through brainstorming and generating multiple solutions. In addition to how these skills help in the mediation program, they are valuable lessons which are generalized in one's life.

The writer came across a number of other successful peer mediation programs in his review of the literature. Benson and Benson (1993) reviewed many programs including research by the National Association for Mediation and found similar results to the Mt. Diablo program. Overall, such programs lessened faculty time spent dealing with conflict, reduce the level of violence and crime in school, and served to enhance the self-esteem, grades and attendance of the students trained as mediators.

Peer mediation programs have also been shown to be successful in urban, ethnically-diverse school systems, including Toronto (Brown, 1995), Philadelphia (Jones & Carlin, 1994), and New York (Payne, 1993). This last study examined Project STOP in Brooklyn, New York, a comprehensive conflict resolution and peer mediation program for middle schools. It was found to be successful on an overall basis, but there were differences in the level of effectiveness depending on the individual school. Factors such as the amount of staff training and time allotted for coordination and administration played a role, as well as the support

given by building administration. Similar to the results found in other studies cited by Benson and Benson (1993) and Faconti and Hagerstrand (1987), it was found to help students resolve problems constructively rather than destructively, encouraged school ownership of problems, and empowered individuals to choose peaceful alternatives to violence.

Description of Selected Solution

The solution chosen by the writer was based on ideas generated by the review of the literature, investigation of approaches to conflict resolution utilized in other school systems, and an analysis of the unique needs of the writer's high school as indicated by student and staff surveys.

The writer decided to implement a conflict resolution program that emphasized students working with other students to settle disputes before they escalated. Toward that end, he felt that a peer mediation program would be the best way to resolve conflicts peacefully in his high school and was willing to serve as the coordinator of such a program.

The peer mediation program would be implemented with a select group of high school seniors serving as the mediators. Special emphasis was placed on recruiting mediators who reflected the multi-ethnic composition of the

student body. The mediators would be chosen from members of the peer leadership program, a group of 36 seniors who work with underclassmen, primarily freshmen, during the school year on goals such as self-esteem and adjusting to the academic and social demands of the high school. The peer leaders would also present conflict resolution techniques to their classes of underclassmen that they met with on a weekly basis. Several faculty members would be recruited to be advisers to the peer mediation program.

The proposal for a peer mediation program was presented to the high school and pupil services department administrators, along with data justifying the need and value of such a program. Faculty members responsible for the peer leadership and interracial councils were queried regarding their input for students who, in their opinion, would make good peer mediators. In addition, the peer leadership advisers agreed to provide the time in their program to incorporate training in conflict resolution and mediation.

The students and faculty advisers would undergo conflict resolution training during the peer leadership orientation and training sessions held at the end of the summer. Training in conflict resolution and peer mediation skills would continue throughout the school year as part of

the peer leadership program. The primary resource was Conflict Resolution: A Secondary School Curriculum by Sadalla, Henriques and Holmberg (1987). In addition, the writer was to obtain a room for use as a peer mediation center from the school administration. The peer mediation program was publicized throughout the school, and post-mediation questionnaires would be utilized as a means of examining the effectiveness of the program. The writer would serve as the coordinator and chief instructor of this program and would generate and maintain appropriate statistical data.

Report of Action Taken

The following steps were taken over a period of eight months in order to implement a conflict resolution and peer mediation program in the writer's high school.

1. In June and July of 1995 the writer discussed the plan for a conflict resolution and peer mediation program with building administrators and his immediate supervisor, the coordinator of the pupil services department. The results from the surveys that were administered during the 1994-95 school year, as well as research justifying the selection of student-based conflict resolution and peer mediation approach, were presented. Administrative approval was given, including the promise of release time for the

writer to serve as coordinator and that a room would be made available for the exclusive use of the peer mediation program.

2. The writer worked with other staff members in the selection process of students who would be working in the program.

3. The writer continued to research the professional literature and contacted other school systems which had peer mediation programs.

4. The practicum formally began when school started during the first week of September, 1995. The writer and other staff advisers met with a group of 36 senior peer leaders during their initial orientation and training weekend retreat. The goals of the conflict mediation and peer mediation program were reviewed, including the expected responsibilities of the peer leaders.

5. During the first month of school, the writer met with the two class sections of peer leadership seniors twice weekly and taught conflict resolution skills. These included the following:

a. defining conflict;

b. examining positive and negative aspects of conflict;

c. analyzing messages received in childhood

about conflict;

d. introducing conflict situations while being able to identify elements of the conflict;

e. understanding what perpetuates and what breaks a negative conflict cycle;

f. examining personal experiences and ways of dealing with conflict; and

g. studying conflict styles and effects, including avoidance, confrontation and problem-solving.

6. The second month of the practicum continued with more elements of conflict resolution. Focus was placed on developing effective communication skills such as active listening and sending "I-messages." During this time the writer also attended a workshop on teaching conflict resolution. This provided classroom materials and activities which were helpful both in instructing to the peer leaders and which they, in turn, were able to use with their freshman classes.

7. The third month of the practicum focused on practical, "hands on" training including role-playing and successful conflict resolution: defining the problem and trying out what makes a successful resolution of the conflict. At the end of this month, the peer mediation

program was explained to the faculty with the expectation that it would become operative in the next month.

8. During the second half of the third and all of the fourth month, formal training in peer mediation took place on a weekly basis with the peer leaders. At this point, classroom sessions were held only once a week as the seniors were already scheduled to lead weekly class sections of freshmen as a way of facilitating in order to ease their adjustment to the high school. The activities were compiled from a number of sources, with the main text and activities obtained from the previously mentioned Conflict Resolution: A Secondary School Curriculum by Sadalla, Henriques and Holmberg (1987). Another text which proved to be especially useful was Peer Mediation: Conflict Resolution in Schools by Schrumpf, Crawford and Usadel (1991). The activities focused on the following objectives:

a. understanding the peer mediation process and the role of the student mediator;
b. strengthening conflict management and negotiation skills;
c. developing the ability to resolve a dispute;
d. teaching peer mediators to ask questions in ways that do not put disputants on the defensive; and

e. learning about protecting confidentiality.

9. At the end of the fourth and start of the fifth month (January, 1996), at what should have been the halfway point, several significant developments took place. The program was ready to become operational. One negative development was that the administration rescinded its approval of release time and a separate room for the mediation program. The coordinator was then forced to use his own office as a mediation room. This put a serious strain on the program because of problems with space and scheduling availability. Another limitation was that the administration was concerned about the type of cases that would be brought to mediation, particularly fearing disputes that featured either violence or gang-related activities. A compromise was worked out in which all possible referrals to mediation would be screened by either the assistant principals (who normally handled discipline) or by the crisis counselors. This led to a more limited scope for the program.

10. At this time 12 peer leaders were chosen who the advisers felt exhibited the potential to be effective mediators and who volunteered to serve in this capacity as part of their community service component of the peer leadership program. Schedules of availability to work as

mediators were established, and there was an effort to balance the pairs of mediators by sex and ethnic background.

11. Training and role-playing continued with the selected peer mediators. Referrals began to come in slowly at this time from appropriate high school personnel. In addition, other peer leadership students reported that some of their freshmen reported that they had been informally using conflict resolution techniques among themselves.

12. Another development during the fifth month was that the writer attended a two-day workshop sponsored by the State Department of Education on peer mediation programs. This provided an excellent review of philosophies, alternate strategies and materials to use in training students. Helpful practical details, such as mediation referral and agreement forms, permission slips, as well as techniques for gaining community acceptance, were discussed. The most positive aspect of this important workshop was the opportunity to brainstorm with other professionals in the field. The feedback from the workshop presenter and the other participants was that the program described in this practicum was well conceptualized and appeared to be operating well except for the fact of not having a room dedicated solely for mediation.

13. The model selected was with two mediators and with an adult staff member in proximity, but not inside the mediation room. For the first few sessions, a faculty adviser did sit in the room to observe and provide feedback, but later the students ran the sessions on their own. The students used the Peer Mediation Center Record of Mediation Session (Appendix C) to record the agreement reached in mediation.

14. At the end of the fifth month the writer began to run feedback sessions with the entire peer leadership classes and the individual mediators to assess the status of the conflict resolution exercises in the classes of freshmen and also with the mediators. The writer also reviewed each of the mediation sessions with the mediators, to assess how well the format was being followed and the appropriateness of the agreements.

15. During the sixth month, weekly feedback sessions were continued with the peer mediators to review how the cases were progressing. Reinforcement of skills were continued in areas that the mediators felt they needed to improve. During this month, focus groups were held with the peer leaders to see how the conflict resolution program was going and to provide an opportunity for the students to share observations with one another. In addition, the

coordinator located the students who had been the disputants in the mediation process to check their perceptions of how the process worked and had the students complete the Peer Mediation Center Post-Mediation Student Survey (Appendix D).

16. For the next three months the feedback sessions took place on a biweekly basis. Statistical information continued to be collected.

17. Staff members were contacted and were given a questionnaire to ascertain their perception of the effectiveness of the mediation sessions (Peer Mediation Center Staff Post-mediation Questionnaire, Appendix E).

18. During the sixth and seventh months the peer leaders made presentations of the conflict resultion to their new groups of freshmen classes, similar to what was done in the first half of the practicum. Mediation sessions continued.

19. During the eighth month the students shared with new candidates for the peer leadership program the experiences that they had in all aspects of the program including conflict resolution and peer mediation. An important aspect was the wrap-up discussion with the peer leaders with the coordinator and other advisory faculty. This provided the chance for some honest exchange of strengths and weaknesses and ways that the program could

improve, including expanding its scope. The students on their own contacted the school administration to see if additional time and resources, including space, could be provided if the program was to be continued next year. Finally, the collection and organization of the pertinent statistical data began at this time to see if the desired goals and outcomes of this practicum were attained.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Data supported the perception that there was an increase in the incidence of aggressive and violent actions on the part of students at the writer's high school. There did not appear to be a consistent, regularly practiced approach in handling these volatile situations. Clearly, there was a need to make the high school a more peaceful environment. The goals of this practicum were to reduce aggressive and violent behavior in the high school through peaceful means of conflict resolution, make students and staff aware that there are peaceful alternatives in conflict situations, and give students a chance to learn and practice peaceful alternatives to conflict. Solution strategies included teaching conflict resolution skills in the classroom and a peer mediation program, both of which emphasized students working with other students to settle differences before they escalated.

The results of the projected outcomes were as follows:

1. The primary outcome will be a peaceful resolution of the conflict in at least 75% of the cases of the projected 150 students who will be referred to peer mediation during the course of this practicum.

This outcome was only partially met.

There were far fewer cases than originally projected brought to mediation, a total of 66 students in 24 mediation sessions. There was a successful resolution in 21 out of the 24 mediation sessions, as measured by the record of the mediation agreements (Appendix C). A qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of the peer mediation was provided by the follow-up surveys of students and staff (Appendixes D and E)and by the observation of the faculty advisers who monitored the mediation sessions. As was discussed earlier, some of the administrative constraints led to restrictions on the scope of the program and the availability of time and space to carry out mediation sessions. In addition, the projection of 150 students was based on an entire school year, whereas, in this case, the peer mediation sessions took place over a time period of a little over four months. However, the rate of success for the mediation sessions was still in line with the original goal of the practicum.

2. Students and staff will know whom to go to in the school setting when aware of a conflict situation.

This outcome was attained.

At the end of the practicum, surveys were given to students (Appendix F, Conflict Survey for Students) who were taught by the senior peer leaders or who had appeared in mediation sessions. The results are summarized in Tables 3 and 4 (pages 46 and 47).

In response to Question 3, "Have you or anyone that you know made an attempt to resolve a conflict peacefully during the past year?", 32 students responded in the affirmative. The most frequent responses to the first part "Who helped resolve the conflict?" was 12 each for other friends and peer mediation. The results were generally described as a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Question 4 also called for open-ended responses. The answers were varied, but among those that were cited in some variation at least several times included: Anyone can learn it; Peer mediation is a good approach; I now know how to handle a difficult situation; and It is important to define the problem in a conflict.

Similarly, a survey (Appendix G) was administered to staff at the close of the practicum and the results are as shown in Table 5 on page 48.

Table 3

Student Responses to Survey Question: "If You Were in a Situation That Might Escalate into a Serious Confrontation, Including Fighting, What Would You Be Most Likely to Do?" (n=145)

Response	Frequency
Settle the conflict directly with other party (including physical action)	15
Walk away from the situation	19
Enlist the help of friends	14
Spread negative information about the other party	4
Go to a staff member for advice. Who?	35
Request peer mediation	46
Not sure	12

Table 4

Student Responses to Survey Question: "If a Friend (or Friends) Were in a Similar Situation, What Would You Do?" (n=145)

Response	Frequency
Talk him/her out of it	24
Tell him/her that you will back them up	17
Go to a staff member for help. Who?	28
Encourage him/her to seek peer mediation	53
Get other people to take your friend's side	7
Stay out of it	9
Not sure	7

Table 5

Responses to Staff Survey: "If You Were Concerned About a Situation Between Students That Might Escalate into a More Serious Confrontation, What Would You Do?" (n=47)

Response	Frequency
Talk to the students	10
Refer to another staff member at school. Who?	17
Tell one of the police officers	0
Refer to peer mediation	11
Tell an administrator	8
Ignore the situation	1
Not Sure	0

In response to the second question, "Have you intervened in any conflict situation during the past school year?", 24 staff members answered in the affirmative. The answer given most often as to who helped resolve the conflict was crisis counselor (10), followed by self (6) and peer mediation (6). It should be noted the relatively shorter time period that peer mediation was available as an

option. The staff also reported that there was usually successful resolution of the conflict through any of these approaches.

It can be seen from the results of both the student and staff surveys that there was a greater concern about handling a conflict situation peacefully than was indicated in surveys administered prior to practicum implementation. This is particularly true in the awareness of conflict resolution offered through the staff or through the use of peer mediation as an alternative.

3. A core group of 36 high school seniors, representative of the multi-ethnic composition of the high school, will be trained in effective conflict resolution strategies.

This outcome was attained.

This was documented by the classroom instruction and training sessions that took place over the course of the practicum. The focus groups with the peer leadership seniors indicated that they found this part of the program to be effective. In addition, the freshmen students that the senior peer leaders taught also made many positive comments about this part of the peer leadership program.

The second part of this goal was the evaluation of the effectiveness of the mediation sessions. This was evaluated

by observations by the faculty advisers to the program, and also by the post-mediation questionnaires completed by students who took part in the sessions and to staff who referred the students. Of the 40 students who returned the post-mediation survey (Appendix D), 33 said that they were satisfied with the mediation agreement, and 30 indicated that they would recommend mediation to a friend who might be in a conflict situation. Ten staff members (most referrals came through the two crisis counselors or the four assistant principals) responded to the staff post-mediation questionnaire (Appendix E). All ten respondents said that they would refer to peer mediation again in a similar situation. These results would appear to indicate that there was effective conflict resolution practiced in the mediation sessions.

4. The number of referrals for aggressive acts (including verbal attacks, physical assault and fighting) against other students or staff (a total of 338 cases last year) will decline by at least 25% at the end of this practicum.

This outcome was met.

With approximately one month to go in the school year, there have been reported 234 cases that would fit this criterion. These include 33 for fighting, 170 for verbal

aggression, 6 for weapons possession, and 25 for assault. The decline in fighting was significant and would appear to have a distinct relationship to the focus of the practicum. It should be noted that the actual length of time that the mediation sessions were operative was less than five months so these results are especially encouraging.

Discussion

The results from the implementation of this practicum indicated that three out of four of the projected outcomes were attained, with the fourth being partially met. Through the introduction of measures such as conflict resolution and peer mediation, the writer's high school became a more peaceful environment as members of the school community learned that there were peaceful alternatives to aggression in resolving disputes.

There was heightened awareness that peaceful means of conflict resolution existed and could work effectively in settling disputes. Prior to this practicum, there was uncertainty as to whom conflict situations should be referred and particularly a reluctance and/or lack of knowledge on the part of students either to step away from a troubling situation or to even get constructively involved. The fact that individuals were at least being forced to look at their attitudes and behaviors in response to conflict

could be seen in the largely diminished number of "Not sure" responses on the student surveys (Appendixes A and F). Students also indicated more of a willingness to talk themselves or their friends out of conflict or to seek out help either through the school's crisis intervention counselors or through peer mediation. Anecdotal reports were also encouraging as a number of the students reported that at different times they had thought through a conflict and refrained from reacting angrily or talked through the situation with a friend. It appears that not only did students acquire some of the principles learned in the conflict resolution classes, but they were also able to apply this knowledge in real-life situations and thus helped themselves and others. This result reflects success in meeting the second and third goals of the practicum, namely, awareness of whom to go to in a conflict situation and the fact that the peer leadership seniors taught conflict resolution skills to underclassmen. From reports of the students and the fact that these aspects of the practicum impacted the largest number of students, these activities very well may have been the most effective part of the practicum.

In analyzing the data related to results of the first projected outcome, the number of cases that would be settled

through peer mediation, it is apparent that this goal was not met. However, the success rate of those cases which were brought to mediation actually exceeds the anticipated outcome. There were significant limitations put on the scope of the program through administrative decree. These affected the type of cases which were referred to peer mediation, and the need of the program itself to deal with a more limited number of cases because of the lack of a separate room and the ready availability of supervision. In retrospect, this may have improved the quality of the program. The fewer mediation sessions that were held made fewer cases for the staff advisers to cover, and it was thus easier for them to review cases in depth and offer critical feedback and suggestions. This also facilitated the process of contacting the students who had taken part in the mediation and obtaining their perceptions of how the process went. In addition, the decision not to have the students mediate cases which involved possible gang activities or fights which had already taken place and for which the combatants had been disciplined, caused less anxiety on the part of the peer mediators. The vast majority of the mediators stated that they were glad to deal with only less intense conflicts, as they were unsure of their ability to keep things from getting out of hand in the more serious

situations. The most significant result was that peer mediation was shown to be effective and that it was a viable means of conflict resolution for students in this high school.

The final goal of the practicum anticipated a 25% decline in reported disciplinary referrals (Appendix H) for aggressive acts against other students or staff, which included verbal attacks, physical assault and fighting. This goal was met, but in this case the reasons may be more varied. Bearing in mind that correlation does not equal causation, it nonetheless appears that the work of this practicum certainly contributed in at least a small way toward enabling students to learn basic conflict resolution skills. They were given a chance to practice them at least informally, or to recognize that in serious conflicts there were other peaceful options available, such as referral to the school's crisis counselors or to peer mediation.

There were other factors operative in the decline in disciplinary referrals and in the perception of the school environment becoming somewhat more peaceful. It should be stressed that the activities of the practicum did not take place in a vacuum. There were other groups operating in the high school to foster interracial understanding and to assist the school administration in calming down potentially

volatile situations which could erupt in full force. The goal of the interracial councils was not to make everyone of different backgrounds friends, but rather to learn to respect one another and to have an outlet in which potentially dangerous situations could be discussed and have the students work on peaceful solutions. The difference from the focus of this practicum is that the interracial council dealt with issues from a large group perspective, whereas peer mediation concentrated on specific disputes between a small number of students, not necessarily of different backgrounds. The success of the interracial councils over the past several years may be seen in the fact that there has been no large-scale fighting during this time period in a school which is extremely diverse ethnically and economically.

The other significant factor contributing to a school atmosphere conducive to learning was a revision of security and discipline codes. There was a policy of zero tolerance for drugs, weapons and fighting which was reinforced by an increased police presence in the school and on its grounds, but in a manner that was relatively unobtrusive. The posting of police provided for an immediate response in cases in which there may have been legal violations. During the course of the academic year there was a drop in these

illegal activities as there was now a much greater chance of being caught and in being dealt with through the legal system, rather than through school officials. There was also a concerted effort on the part of administrators to enforce the school discipline code fairly and consistently. The message appeared to take hold among students that it was more difficult to break school rules, and that consequences were much more likely if they did so. This helped to set a more business-like tone in the school and fostered a more positive learning environment.

In summary, the steps carried out in this practicum helped to foster an improved school atmosphere. Collecting data on fighting and other forms of aggression among some students raised the level of awareness of these problems and the need to take positive steps to correct them. The process of implementing this practicum took place at the same time that the school made a commitment in other ways to improve the level of order and discipline in the school. Results from the practicum implementation indicate that the approach of students working with other students, in teaching conflict resolution skills and operating a peer mediation program, was successful. There was a definite change in the knowledge of the school community that peaceful alternatives existed in conflict situations, and

the concept of avoiding conflict and seeking peace became acceptable both in attitude and in actual student behavior. To some extent, the incidence of violent, aggressive behaviors on the part of students declined. This practicum certainly played a key role in reducing the negative behaviors, although the changes in school security and discipline were also important and complementary to this process. This practicum was a significant step in improving the workings of the writer's high school. There is now a structure in place for these peaceful approaches to be practiced and there is a favorable prognosis that the scope of the program will positively affect more students in the coming school years.

Recommendations

Based upon the results of this practicum and the discussion of these results, the writer offers the following recommendations:

1. The actual start-up of the peer mediation program should occur earlier in the school year. This would benefit the peer mediators in that they would gain more experience and thus further develop their mediation skills. This would also enable the program to reach more students throughout the year. This would require changes in the instructional component of the program. This might lead to deleting some

of the material and also increasing the initial instructional time to three times per week. This would require negotiation with the peer leadership faculty as they have other activities prioritized in the initial phase of their program.

2. Administrative support is needed to help strengthen the program. This includes providing a separate room which is available on a full-time basis for peer mediation. This will enable the records to be stored in an easily available location, and will also enable the program to run more on its own without having to wait for space to be cleared in the coordinator's office. A separate room will also add to the program's prestige and send the message to the disputants that they are part of a process that is taken seriously. Another need is to free staff to devote the time that is truly necessary to run the program smoothly. This time is required for student training and supervision, data collection and follow-up with disputants to monitor the success of the mediation sessions. One way that this can be done is to free the staff involved with this program from extra student supervisory responsibilities such as study hall or cafeteria duty.

3. There should be more emphasis on students running the program to a greater extent. They can take over some of

the record-keeping and monitoring. In addition, students should be able to refer themselves (or their friends) directly to the program without first having to go through school administrators. Hopefully, with the initial success of this program, the administration will be more open to allowing this to happen. Control can still be maintained in restricting certain types of issues from being brought to mediation (such as drugs or weapons) in which there are obvious legal ramifications.

4. More students should serve as mediators. An earlier start to the scheduling of mediation sessions would help, as more of the peer leaders might choose mediation as their community service responsibility before they have decided upon other choices. A second approach might be to have juniors trained as mediators, although scheduling logistics would dictate that this would probably have to be done separately from the training with the peer leadership seniors. This development would help in the utilization of the program, and it would also leave a core group of mediators ready to staff the program at the start of the next school year.

5. Training in conflict resolution should be expanded to include all freshmen. During the last year the peer leadership seniors taught freshmen who were part of a teamed

format. This reached about two-thirds of that class, but excluded accelerated or special education students in self-contained programs. This change is especially important since feedback was so favorable and the skills which were presented can be applied both in and out of school.

6. The students from this peer mediation program should be allowed to network both with other professionals and with other student groups in the state. Visitations can be arranged with other schools and a demonstration of this program would be informative. In addition, the writer attended a state-wide workshop on peer mediation during the last school year, and he would like these students (or students from other programs) to take part in the conference to share experiences and help provide a realistic picture of what the program is like.

Dissemination

The writer plans to disseminate the results of this practicum in the following ways:

1. This program was brought to the attention of the Board of Education during a presentation highlighting the activities of the district's school psychologists.

2. The results of this practicum will be shared with the high school administration. This will serve as a means of obtaining support for the program's continuation and also

for staff release time and the separate room for peer mediation which was originally promised.

3. This practicum will be shared with members of the Pupil Services Department. The writer will be available for assistance for any department members who might like to start a similar program in their school buildings.

4. The results of this practicum will be submitted for inclusion in a State Department of Education publication listing programs serving as alternatives to violence. The high school's peer leadership program is already included in this publication.

5. The writer will seek to be a presenter at next year's workshop on peer mediation programs sponsored by the State Department of Education.

6. The writer plans to submit the results of this practicum for inclusion in the newsletter of the state school psychologist association.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT HELP QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT HELP QUESTIONNAIRE
(138 subjects; # of responses in parentheses)

Please choose one answer to the following questions. Put your choices on this paper. Do not include your name.

1. If you are experiencing a serious personal problem how would you go about resolving it
   a. Try to work it out myself. (32)
   b. Talk to a best friend. (72)
   c. Talk to my parent(s). (20)
   d. Talk to someone at school. Who? (12)
   e. Do something else. What? (2)

2. A good friend is experiencing a serious problem. How would you deal with the situation?
   a. Let the friend work it out by him/herself. (3)
   b. Talk over the situation with the friend. (47)
   c. Discuss the situation with other friends. (29)
   d. Encourage your friend to talk to someone at school. Who? (31)
   e. Do something else. What? (4)
   f. Not sure what to do. (24)

3. You are concerned that a friend may do something to hurt him/herself, including suicide. What should you do?
   a. Let it go, you have no right to intervene. (0)
   b. Tell his/her parents. (10)
   c. Tell someone at school. Who? (34; 22 chose psychologist)
   d. Discuss it among friends. (35)
   e. Not sure. (59)

4. There is trouble brewing between some students, possibly one of whom is a friend. A fight may break out. What should you do?
   1. Get other friends involved. (16)
   2. Stay out of it, it is none of your business. (12)
   3. Tell people at school. Who? (50; 13 didn't know whom they would tell)
   4. Tell the police. (4)
   5. Not sure. (56)

5. In general, whom would you go to in school if you or a friend were experiencing a serious problem?

6. Whom in school would you go to if you suspected that a friend was going to hurt him/herself?

7. If you thought a fight was about to break out, whom in school would you go to?

APPENDIX B

STUDENT HELP SURVEY (STAFF)

STUDENT HELP SURVEY (STAFF)
(42 subjects; # of reponses in parentheses)

Please put all responses on this page. Do not include your name.

1. If a student comes to you indicating that he/she is experiencing some personal problems, what would you do?
   a. Discuss it with the student. (21)
   b. Contact the parent(s). (2)
   c. Encourage the student to discuss the matter with the parent(s). (8)
   d. Refer the student to another staff member at the high school. Who? (11)
   e. Not sure what to do. (0)

2. If you become aware through other people that a student is experiencing serious problems, what would you do?
   a. Ignore it since you do not observe anything wrong with the student. (5)
   b. Talk to the student with the problem. (6)
   c. Contact the student's parent(s). (1)
   d. Refer the case to an administrator. (4)
   e. Make a referral to the Child Study Team. (5)
   f. Refer the student to another staff member. Who? (24)
   g. Not sure. (2)

3. A student may give indications that he/she is at risk for suicide. What would you do?
   a. Refer the case to an administrator. (7)
   b. Bring the student to Crisis Intervention at the hospital. (0)
   c. Contact the parent(s). (4)
   d. Refer the student to another staff member. Who? (27)
   e. Make a referral to the Child Study Team. (3)
   f. Not sure. (1)

4. There is trouble between students that may lead to a fight. What would you do?
   a. Refer it to an administrator. (12)
   b. Refer it to another staff member. Who? (24)
   c. Do nothing if it is a situation outside of school. (5)
   d. Contact all or some of the parents of these students. (0)
   e. Inform one of the police officers stationed at the high school. (1)
   f. Not sure. (0)

Thank you for your cooperation. Please leave the completed survey in my mailbox on Level 2.
Ted Kinasewitz

APPENDIX C

PEER MEDIATION CENTER RECORD
OF MEDIATION SESSION

PEER MEDIATION CENTER

RECORD OF MEDIATION SESSION

STUDENTS' NAMES:

PERSON(S) MAKING THE REFERRAL:

DATE:

PRESENTING PROBLEM:

THE FOLLOWING WAS AGREED TO:

FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS NEEDED?:

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

_____

Faculty Adviser

APPENDIX D

PEER MEDIATION CENTER POST-MEDIATION
SURVEY (STUDENT)

PEER MEDIATION CENTER

POST-MEDIATION SURVEY (STUDENT)

1. Did the mediator explain the mediation process clearly to you?

2. Did you feel that you were able to explain your side of the story adequately?

3. Did you reach a better understanding of the other person's perspective?

4. Was the mediator able to maintain a non-biased position?

5. Are you satisfied with the agreement reached through mediation?

6. Would you recommend mediation to a friend who is in a conflict situation with another student?

APPENDIX E

PEER MEDIATION CENTER STAFF
POST-MEDIATION QUESTIONNAIRE

PEER MEDIATION CENTER

STAFF POST-MEDIATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did a Peer Mediation member get back to you in a timely manner to set up a mediation session with the students?

2. Were you informed about the resolution reached in the case?

3. Have you any information to indicate that the issue has not been resolved?

4. If a similar situation arose again, would you refer the case to Peer Mediation again?

5. If the answer to the above question is *No*, what would you do?

APPENDIX F

CONFLICT SURVEY FOR STUDENTS

CONFLICT SURVEY FOR STUDENTS

1. If you were in a situation that might escalate into a serious confrontation, including fighting, what would you be most likely to do?

   a. Settle the conflict directly with the other party (including physical action).
   b. Walk away from the situation.
   c. Enlist the help of friends.
   d. Spread negative information about the other party.
   e. Go to a staff member for advice. Who?
   f. Request peer mediation.
   g. Not sure.

2. If a friend (or friends) were in a similar situation, what would you do?

   a. Talk him/her out of it.
   b. Tell him/her that you will back them up.
   c. Go to a staff member for help. Who?
   d. Encourage him/her to seek peer mediation.
   e. Get other people to take your friend's side.
   f. Stay out of it.
   g. Not sure.

3. Have you or anyone that you know made an attempt to resolve a conflict peacefully during the past year?

   a. Who helped resolve the conflict?

   b. What was the result?

4. What have you learned about conflict resolution during the past school year?

APPENDIX G

STAFF SURVEY, CONFLICT RESOLUTION

STAFF SURVEY

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. If you were concerned about a situation between students that might escalate into a more serious confrontation, what would you do?

   a. Talk to the students.
   b. Refer to another staff member at school. Who?
   c. Tell one of the police officers.
   d. Refer to peer mediation.
   e. Tell an administrator.
   f. Ignore the situation.
   g. Not sure.

2. Have you intervened in any conflict situations during the past school year?

   a. Who helped resolve the conflict?

   b. What was the result?

APPENDIX H

DISCIPLINE REFERRAL REPORT

D.H.S. REFERRAL REPORT

NAME OF STUDENT	DATE OF INCIDENT	PERIOD	GRADE	PERSON MAKING REFERRAL

I. REASON FOR REFERRAL
(PLEASE BE SPECIFIC)

REMARKS: _____

II. PREVIOUS ACTION BY TEACHER

___ SENT REPORT HOME
___ DETAINED STUDENT
___ CHANGED STUDENT'S SEAT
___ ASSIGNED DETENTION
___ CONFERENCE WITH STUDENT
___ CONSULTED COUNSELOR
___ CONFERENCE WITH PARENT
___ OTHER - SEE BELOW

DATE OF TELEPHONE CONTACT WITH PARENT _____

REMARKS: _____

III. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

___ CONFERENCE WITH STUDENT
___ LETTER TO PARENT
___ TELEPHONED PARENT
___ CONFERENCE WITH PARENT
___ STUDENT, TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR CONFERENCE
___ REFERRED TO COUNSELOR
___ DETENTION
___ REOCCURRING INCIDENTS TO BE INVESTIGATED
___ ANOTHER REFERRAL MAY RESULT IN
___ I.S.S.
___ O.S.S. ___ DAYS

REMARKS:

ADMINISTRATOR	DATE

COPIES: WHITE - ADMINISTRATOR, YELLOW - STUDENT/PARENT, PINK - TEACHER.
*A STUDENT WILL NOT BE PLACED IN I.S.S. MORE THAN 5 TIMES IN ONE SEMESTER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE